

VZCZCXRO5481
OO RUEHCN RUEH DU RUEHGH RUEHMR RUEHRN RUEHVC
DE RUEHBJ #1568 1140944
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 230944Z APR 08
FM AMEMBASSY BEIJING
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6839
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY IMMEDIATE
RUEHSB/AMEMBASSY HARARE IMMEDIATE 0121
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 3355

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIJING 001568

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/23/2028
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [CH](#) [ZI](#) [SADC](#)
SUBJECT: MFA: ARMS TO ZIMBABWE PART OF "NORMAL TRADE"

REF: STATE 42016

Classified By: Deputy Political Section Chief Ben Moeling. Reasons 1.4
(B/D).

¶1. (C) Summary: China's recent shipment of arms to Zimbabwe is part of the normal trade in arms between two sovereign nations and is not connected to the current political situation, MFA Arms Control and Disarmament Department Missiles and Conventional Weapons Division Director Zhang Jun'an told PolOff April 22. Zimbabwe, like all sovereign nations, has a right to national defense, including the purchase of arms. However, because delivery of the arms has been blocked "for various reasons," the Chinese shipping company is considering having the ship return to China. PolOff stressed that under the current extraordinary circumstances in Zimbabwe, arms sales would be ill-advised and could lead to regional destabilization. End Summary.

¶2. (C) In urgent evening meeting, PolOff and UK First Secretary Gareth Ward on April 22 jointly delivered to MFA

SIPDIS

Arms Control and Disarmament Department Missiles and Conventional Weapons Division Director Zhang Jun'an reftel points on arms sales to Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwe: A "Normal Arms Trade"

¶3. (C) The recent shipment of arms to Zimbabwe is part of the normal trade in arms between two sovereign nations, Zhang told PolOff. The contract for the arms was signed last year and the delivery is not related to the current situation. Rumors about the sale, including a story that the deal was signed just three days before the election, are "vicious fabrications" not grounded in common sense. PolOff replied that the current situation in Zimbabwe makes the delivery of arms more than a mere commercial transaction and noted it could further destabilize an already unstable nation. Zhang noted that the delivery could not be offloaded "for various reasons" and said the shipping company is considering having the ship return to China. PolOff emphasized that this decision would be wise.

China on Arms Sales: Reasonable and Cautious

¶4. (C) China is "reasonable and cautious" in its arms sales and adheres to certain principles, including non-interference in the internal affairs of other countries, when making its decisions, Zhang said. Thus, China hopes that "other countries will not politicize the sale of arms to Zimbabwe." Zimbabwe, like all sovereign nations, has the right to national defense, and the recent sale falls within that definition. Zhang said that while China "appreciates" that

the United States and European Union have imposed their own restrictions on arms sales to Zimbabwe, the UN Security Council (UNSC) has not approved any sanctions. When PolOff emphasized the need to sell arms not only within the letter of the law, but also within the spirit of the law, Zhang said sharply that China "rejects strongly" the "accusation" that it does not obey the spirit of the law. PolOff reiterated that this is a sensitive time for Zimbabwe, and arms sales could increase the instability in the region.

15. (C) Following the demarche, UK PolOff commented that things had gone "better than expected," and that despite the "MFA's standard language," the Chinese Government appears to agree on the need for stability in Zimbabwe. This demarche comes in advance of a scheduled April 24 phone call between British Political Director Mark Lyall Grant and Assistant Foreign Minister He Yafei, during which Lyall Grant will raise Zimbabwe. UK PolOff said he anticipates that efforts at the working level, coupled with continued high level pressure, may ultimately yield "quiet dividends" on this issue.

PICCUA